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DAREDEVIL AGAINST
DAREDEVIL
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MITCH ROTH AND JEFF O'BRIEN HAVE BEEN PARTNERED FOR TWO YEARS NOW.
A COUPLE OF DECENT, HARDWORKING FAMILY MEN WHO HAVE NO STOMACH FOR GRAFT OR RACISM OR BRUTALITY.
IT'S NOT EASY WORK, BEING A NEW YORK COP.
KNOWING THAT YOU'LL BE FACE-TO-FACE WITH THE FESTERING UNDERBELLY OF YOUR CITY CAN MAKE IT HARD TO GET OUT OF BED IN THE MORNING.
THAT YOUR STOMACH GRUMBLING, MITCH?
YEAH. MUST BE TIME FOR A QUICK SLICE O' PIZZA.
KEEP EATIN' THAT JUNK, MITCHIE, AND YOU'RE GONNA END UP A FAT OLD MAN LIKE--
BUT, TO THESE MEN, THE MEAT OF THE JOB IS HELPING PEOPLE. WATCHING OVER THEM LIKE GUARDIAN ANGELS.
THAT'S WHERE THE SATISFACTION ...THE REAL JOY... COMES IN.
--ME...?!
WHAT THE DEVIL IS THAT?
I DON'T KNOW! BUT IT DON'T LOOK LIKE HE'S GETTIN' OUTTA THE WAY!
TONIGHT THAT JOY IS GOING TO BE, QUITE LITERALLY, BLED OUT OF THEM...

...BY A LUNATIC NAMED--SIR.

STAN LEE PRESENTS:

INFERNO

PART THREE

A HAPPY LUNATIC, AT THE MOMENT.

HAPPY BECAUSE OF THE RED SUIT HE'S WEARING; THE SUIT HE STRIPPED OFF DAREDEVIL'S BROKEN BODY.

IN SIR'S WARPED UNIVERSE, THE MALE SPIRIT--IN ALL ITS PRIMAL, SAVAGE GLORY---IS GOD. TO BE ANYTHING LESS IS TO BE FLAWED AND WEAK AND UNWORTHY OF LIFE.

(WHICH IS WHY SIR HAS SPENT SO MUCH OF HIS TIME LATELY MURDERING WOMEN. THEIR VERY EXISTENCE, HE BELIEVES, IS AN AFFRONT TO HIS GOD.)

AND HE SEEKS--IN HIS DEMENTED WAY--TO CONSUME MORE AND MORE OF THAT ENERGY; TO ABSORB IT INTO HIMSELF--AND BLOT OUT HIS OWN WEAKNESSES.

SKREEEEE

RW-WR

KRASSSSSH!

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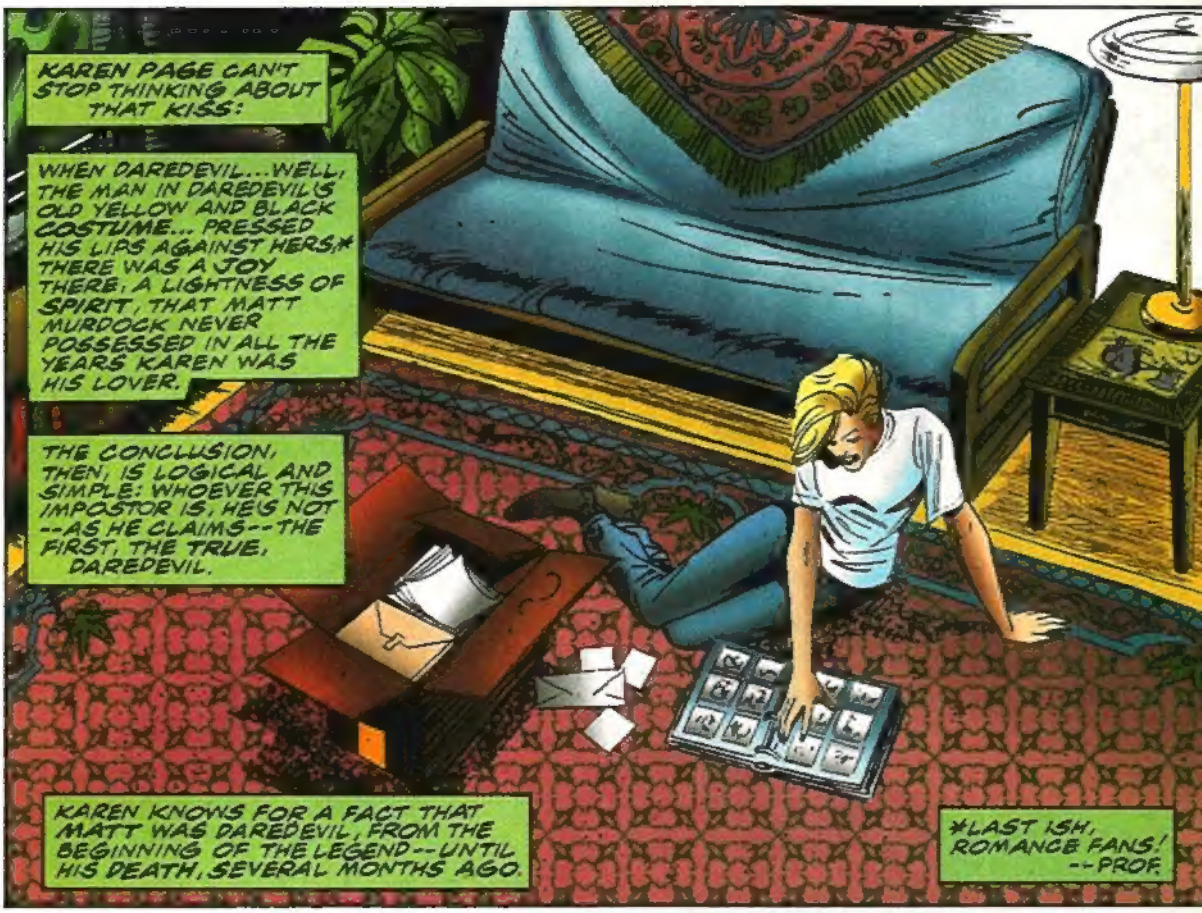
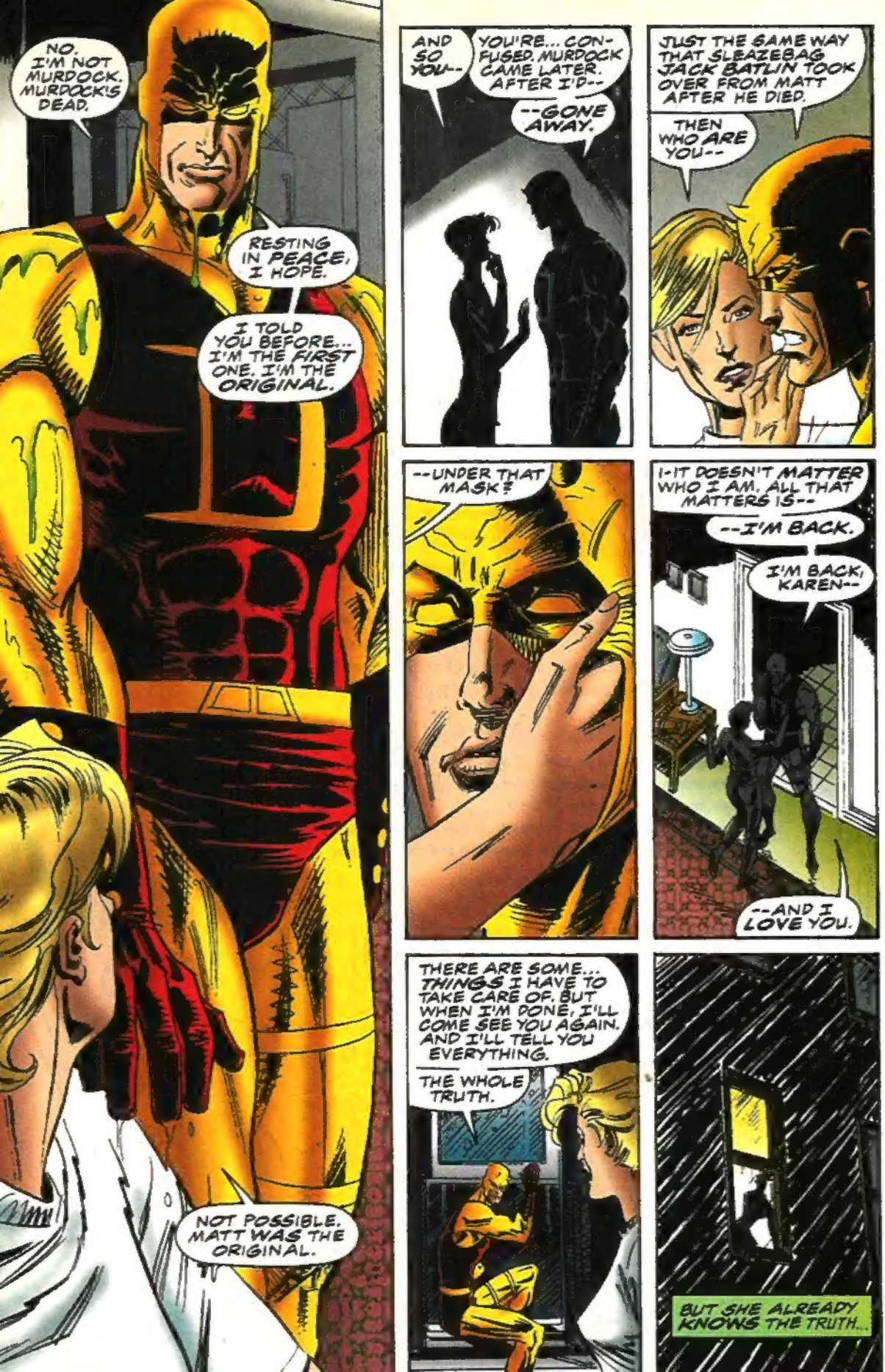
JEFF!
THE SUIT, SIR THINKS, IS A MEANS TO THAT END. FEELING IT AGAINST HIS FLESH, HE IMAGINES A FLOOD OF MALENESS, OF SCARLET PSYCHIC ENERGY, POURING INTO HIM.
THE ESSENCE OF ALL THAT DAREDEVIL WAS (FOR THE MAN IS SURELY DEAD; BODY ROTTING AT THE WAREHOUSE WHERE THEY BATTLED), IS NOW IN HIM.
SKRAJJKT!
SO HE WATCHES THE POLICE CAR CRASH AND BURN, MITCH ROTH CRASHING AND BURNING WITH IT.
IN THE LIFE HE LIVED BEFORE... IN THOSE WRETCHED DAYS BEFORE HE WAS TRANSFORMED... SIR VIEWED ALL POLICEMEN AS HARD AND BRUTAL AND COLD.
THEY WERE EVERYTHING HE HATED--AND ASPIRED TO BE.
PLEASE... I HAVE A WIFE... KIDS...
SO WHAT BETTER WAY TO ADD TO HIS STORE OF POWER, HE SUDDENLY REALIZES, THAN BY KILLING AS MANY POLICEMEN AS HE CAN...
KRAKATHOOM
...AND LETTING THEIR MALENESS TRICKLE, LIKE BLOOD...
...INTO HIS EVERY CELL?


KAREN PAGE CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT THAT KISS:
WHEN DAREDEVIL...WELL, THE MAN IN DAREDEVIL'S OLD YELLOW AND BLACK COSTUME... PRESSED HIS LIPS AGAINST HERS,* THERE WAS A JOY THERE; A LIGHTNESS OF SPIRIT, THAT MATT MURDOCK NEVER POSSESSED IN ALL THE YEARS KAREN WAS HIS LOVER.
THE CONCLUSION, THEN, IS LOGICAL AND SIMPLE: WHOEVER THIS IMPOSTOR IS, HE'S NOT --AS HE CLAIMS-- THE FIRST, THE TRUE, DAREDEVIL.
KAREN KNOWS FOR A FACT THAT MATT WAS DAREDEVIL, FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE LEGEND--UNTIL HIS DEATH, SEVERAL MONTHS AGO.
*LAST ISH, ROMANCE FANS! --PROF.

SO WHY DOES SHE KEEP COMING BACK TO THAT KISS? WHY DOES SHE KEEP SIFTING THROUGH THE PAST, RELIVING OLD TIMES THAT SOMEHOW SEEM SO GOLDEN NOW?

PERHAPS IT'S BECAUSE SHE CAN'T HELP THINKING THAT THE WAY HE KISSED HER... IS THE WAY MATT WOULD HAVE KISSED HER, IF HE'D HAD THE COURAGE, IN THOSE EARLY, AWKWARD DAYS.

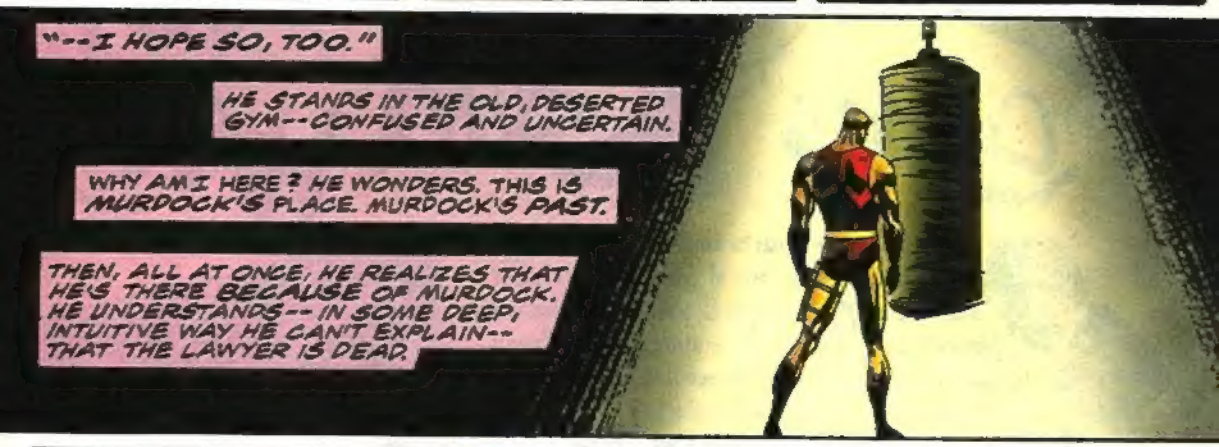
PERHAPS IT'S BECAUSE SHE'S BECOME MORE AND MORE CONVINCED THAT--LOGIC BE DAMNED--THAT MAN IN THE DINER WAS--
--MATT...?


NO. I'M NOT MURDOCK. MURDOCK'S DEAD.
RESTING IN PEACE, I HOPE.
I TOLD YOU BEFORE... I'M THE FIRST ONE. I'M THE ORIGINAL.
NOT POSSIBLE. MATT WAS THE ORIGINAL.
AND SO YOU--
YOU'RE... CONFUSED. MURDOCK CAME LATER. AFTER I'D--
--GONE AWAY.
JUST THE SAME WAY THAT SLEAZEBAG JACK BATLIN TOOK OVER FROM MATT AFTER HE DIED.
THEN WHO ARE YOU--
--UNDER THAT MASK?
I-IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO I AM. ALL THAT MATTERS IS--
--I'M BACK.
I'M BACK, KAREN--
--AND I LOVE YOU.
THERE ARE SOME... THINGS I HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF. BUT WHEN I'M DONE, I'LL COME SEE YOU AGAIN. AND I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING.
THE WHOLE TRUTH.
BUT SHE ALREADY KNOWS THE TRUTH...

...AND IT TERRIFIES HER.
...SO THEY SAY IT WAS DAREDEVIL MADE THIS MESS, HUH?
ACCORDING TO THE FEW WITNESSES, HE CAME CRASHING THROUGH THAT SKYLIGHT, WRESTLING WITH A--BALD GIANT.

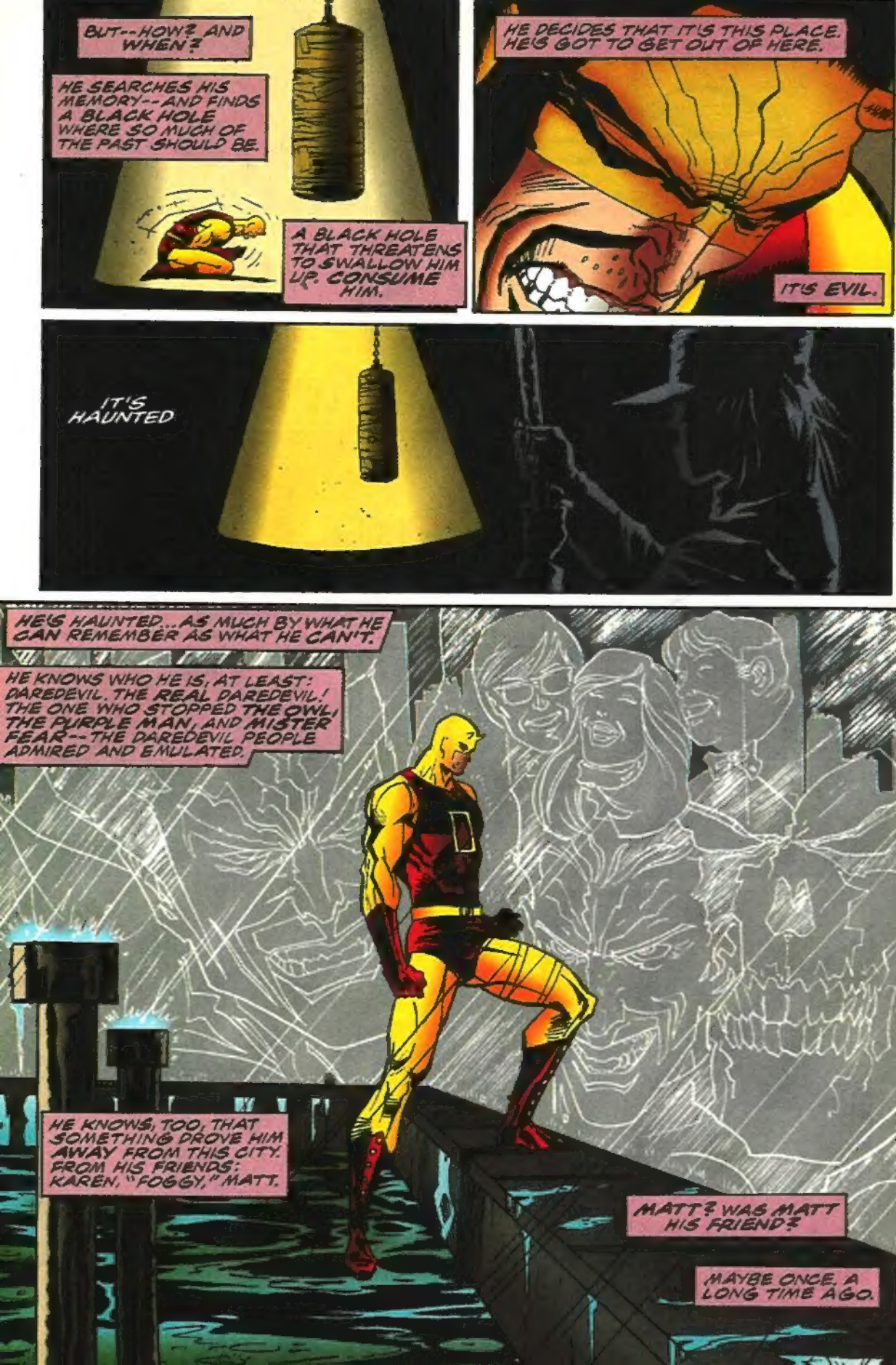
FITS THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WHACKO WHO THREW MELINDA DENNIS OUT THAT WINDOW UP ON SEVENTIETH.
IF DD WAS MESSING WITH THAT GUY, I HOPE HE CAME THROUGH IT IN ONE PIECE.

YEAH--


"--I HOPE SO, TOO."
HE STANDS IN THE OLD, DESERTED GYM--CONFUSED AND UNCERTAIN.
WHY AM I HERE? HE WONDERS. THIS IS MURDOCK'S PLACE. MURDOCK'S PAST.
THEN, ALL AT ONCE, HE REALIZES THAT HE'S THERE BECAUSE OF MURDOCK. HE UNDERSTANDS--IN SOME DEEP, INTUITIVE WAY HE CAN'T EXPLAIN--THAT THE LAWYER IS DEAD.

THEN HE FAKED HIS DEATH. AND HE'S WAITING TO COME BACK.
COME BACK AND CORRUPT THE NAME OF DAREDEVIL AGAIN.
TO LAUGH AT ALL THAT'S DECENT...

...AND SIN.
HE CAN'T ALLOW THAT.
FAPP
HE'LL STOP MURDOCK THE WAY HE STOPPED BATLIN.
NO MORE FRAUDS. NO MORE LIARS.
FAPP
IT'S TIME FOR DAREDEVIL TO BE A HERO AGAIN.
A REAL HERO.
FAPP
NOT SOME CHEAP, SOULLESS THUG HIDING BEHIND A HERO'S MASK.
I HATE YOU, MURDOCK! I HATE YOU AND EVERYTHING YOU STAND FO--
SMAK
THE PAIN SHOOTS UP HIS LEFT ARM--AND IT TAKES ALL HIS CONTROL TO HOLD BACK A HOWL OF PAIN.
HIS HAND IS FRACTURED. HE REALIZES; MAYBE BROKEN.


BUT--HOW? AND WHEN?
HE SEARCHES HIS MEMORY--AND FINDS A BLACK HOLE WHERE SO MUCH OF THE PAST SHOULD BE.
A BLACK HOLE THAT THREATENS TO SWALLOW HIM UP. CONSUME HIM.
HE DECIDES THAT IT'S THIS PLACE. HE'S GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE.
IT'S EVIL.
IT'S HAUNTED
HE'S HAUNTED...AS MUCH BY WHAT HE CAN REMEMBER AS WHAT HE CAN'T.
HE KNOWS WHO HE IS, AT LEAST: DAREDEVIL. THE REAL DAREDEVIL! THE ONE WHO STOPPED THE OWL, THE PURPLE MAN, AND MISTER FEAR--THE DAREDEVIL PEOPLE ADMIRED AND EMULATED.
HE KNOWS, TOO, THAT SOMETHING DROVE HIM AWAY FROM THIS CITY. FROM HIS FRIENDS: KAREN, "FOGGY," MATT.
MATT? WAS MATT HIS FRIEND?
MAYBE ONCE. A LONG TIME AGO.

BUT NOW IT'S TIME TO FIND MURDOCK. STOP HIM-- ONCE AND FOR ALL.
THEN HE CAN HAVE A LIFE AGAIN. A GOOD AND DECENT LIFE. AS DAREDEVIL AND AS...
...AS...
AGAIN, THE BLACK HOLE IN HIS MEMORY THREATENS TO SWALLOW HIM; AND HE REALIZES, TO HIS HORROR, THAT THE REASON HE DIDN'T LET KAREN TAKE OFF HIS MASK EARLIER...
...WAS BECAUSE HE HAD NO IDEA...
...WHOSE FACE WAS UNDERNEATH.
THE MASK IS TIGHT, BUT SIR DOESN'T CARE. A LITTLE DISCOMFORT IS A SMALL PRICE TO PAY FOR THE HEADY RUSH OF POWER THE COSTUME GIVES HIM.
POWER TO CLEANSE HIMSELF, REMAKE HIMSELF. POWER TO KILL YESTERDAY.
THE PAST HAS TO DIE.
SHAME HAS TO DIE.
EVERYONE, EVERY THING, HE ONCE WAS, HAS TO BE CONSUMED IN A FIERY TOWER OF MALENESS.

AND HERE.. HERE IS WHERE HE'LL MAKE HIS STAND. MURDER YESTERDAY...
POLICE
...ONCE AND FOR ALL.
KASSSSSH!
UNIFORMS, UNIFORMS-- SO MANY UNIFORMS!
SO MUCH MALE ENERGY TO ABSORB!
TO BECOME!
FOR A MOMENT AN IMAGE FLASHES BEFORE HIS MIND'S EYE--HE SEES HIMSELF AS HE WAS BEFORE THE TRANSFORMATION, SEES THE NAKED FEAR, THE FLESHY WEAKNESS.
IN DISGUST, HE PUSHES THE IMAGE AWAY.
RAKKKK
WHOEVER THAT PERSON WAS, HE THINKS; IT'S NOT ME. IT WAS NEVER ME!
I'M BLOOD AND MANHOOD, FIRE AND RAGE!

I'M SIR!!
NOK NOK NOK NOK NOK
FOGGY NELSON CAN SLEEP THROUGH ANYTHING.
NOK NOK NOK NOK NOK NOK
WHEN HE WAS A KID, HIS OLDER BROTHER USED TO STAND OVER HIS BED BANGING MOM'S BIG SOUP POT WITH A METAL SPOON... JUST TO SEE IF IT WOULD HAVE ANY EFFECT.
IT NEVER DID.
SO IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT IT TAKES NEARLY TEN MINUTES OF ANGRY BANGING BEFORE "FOGGY" SO MUCH AS STIRS.
NOK NOK NOK
AND EVEN THEN IT'S SOME SIXTH SENSE -- FAR MORE THAN THE NOISE -- THAT FINALLY WAKES HIM.
HE KNOWS THERE'S TROUBLE AT THE DOOR. HE KNOWS HE SHOULDN'T OPEN IT.
AND HE KNOWS HE HAS TO.
KAREN...?
GET DRESSED WE'VE GOT TO GO.
COME IN OUT OF THE RAIN, WILL YOU? YOU'RE GONNA GET PNEUMON--
NO. WE'VE GOT TO GO NOW.
WHERE?
TO FIND A MAN--

"...NAMED JACK BATLIN."
WHEN HE HEARD THE REPORTS ABOUT THE LUNATIC IN THE DAREDEVIL SUIT, HE WAS SURE IT MUST BE MURDOCK.
BUT NO . IT'S ANOTHER IMPOSTOR COME TO SPIT ON THE LEGEND HE'S WORKED SO HARD TO BUILD.
EVERY WHERE THERE'S BLOOD. BROKEN BODIES WRECKAGE.
DISGRACE.
HE WON'T TOLERATE IT ANY MORE. HE CAME BACK TO PUT AN END TO THIS MADNESS...
...AND HE WILL!
SIR, FOR HIS PART, IS DELIGHTED TO SEE THIS LATEST VARIATION ON A THEME. ANOTHER. SUIT TO STRIP AWAY; ANOTHER SOURCE OF POWER.
ANOTHER CHANCE TO DESTROY THE PAST-- AND BURY THE DISGRACE AND HUMILIATION .

... OF WHAT HE WAS BEFORE.
WOMP
CHAK
SPAAK
KOOF

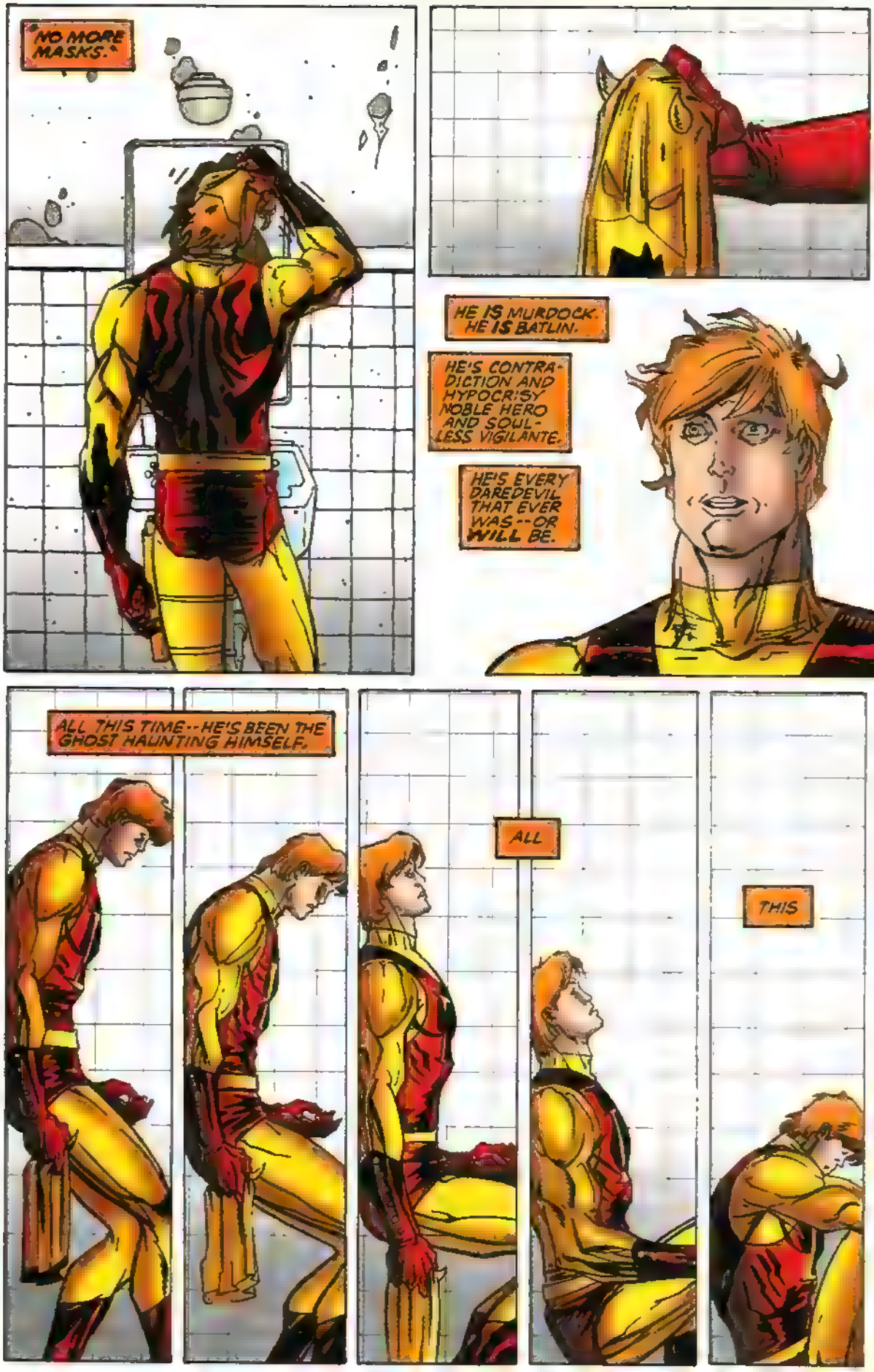
GET UP! DAMN YOU! GET UP--
--SO I CAN KNOCK YOU DOWN--
--AGAIN...?
I'LL ONLY SAY THIS ONCE--
--DON'T MOVE!

N-NO... THE GUY IN THE YELLOW SUIT... HE TRIED TO HELP US.
I-IT'S THE OTHER ONE WHO--
THE OTHER ONE WHO TAKES ADVANTAGE OF THE MOMENTARY DISTRACTION TO EXPLODE IN FURY.
TO SHATTER MORE BONES, SPILL MORE BLOOD
POLICE
ENOUGH!
I KNOW NOW.. SIR. I KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT YOU
YOUR DIRTY LITTLE SECRET.
YOU DON'T KNOW ME! YOU CAN'T KNOW ME!
THE WORDS TUMBLE OUT OF THIS DAREDEVIL'S MOUTH-- AND THEY SURPRISE HIM ALMOST AS MUCH...
NO!!
...AS THEY SURPRISE SIR

I DON'T EVEN KNOW MYSELF!
BUT SIR DOES KNOW HIMSELF.
NO MATTER HOW LONG, HOW HARD, HE'S STRUGGLED TO KEEP THE TRUTH LOCKED AWAY IN A DARK CORNER OF HIS MIND..
..IT'S ALWAYS BEEN THERE-- LIKE A LETHAL JACK-IN-THE-BOX...
NO MORE HIDING! NO MORE LIES!
...WAITING TO SPRING OUT AND DESTROY HIM.
NO MORE MASKS!
STOP!!
STOP!
HOW DID THEY DO IT?
KOONT
HORMONES? MUSCLE GRAFTS?
SMAKK
AND WHY DID THEY DO IT?
DID YOU HATE YOURSELF SO MUCH?
--THAT YOU HAD TO BURY WHO YOU TRULY
THE GIANT COLLAPSES...
TOOM

BATTERED NOT SO MUCH BY THE BLOWS AS BY THE WORDS. HE COVERS HIS EARS, TRYING TO BLOT DAREDEVIL OUT--BUT HE CAN'T BLOT OUT THE TRUTH INSIDE HIM. NO...
...INSIDE HER.
HOW DID THEY DO IT? SHE THINKS, TRYING TO GRASP THE CHEMICALLY REPRESSED MEMORIES. AND WHO WERE THEY? SHE TRULY DOESN'T KNOW. ALL SHE CAN REMEMBER IS THAT SHE WANTED THEM TO DO IT. THAT SHE LOATHED HERSELF LOATHED HER SOFTNESS HER... FEMALENESS.
ALL HER LIFE SHE'D BEEN VICTIMIZED. BRUTALIZED BY THE MALE ANIMAL. SHE NEEDED TO BE STRONG, POWERFUL. SHE NEEDED TO BECOME THE ENEMY...
... IN ORDER TO SURVIVE.
BUT HER WEAKNESS WON IN THE END: SHE PANICKED AND RAN BEFORE THEY WERE DONE WITH HER. BEFORE SHE WAS..

...COMPLETE.
AS THE POLICE TAKE SIR INTO CUSTODY, DAREDEVIL TURNS AND WALKS AWAY. HE FEELS NO PRIDE IN THIS VICTORY. ALL HE FEELS
HEY-- DAREDEVIL!
DAREDEVIL--
--WAIT!
GUESS HE DON'T FEEL LIKE TALKIN'.
...IS FEAR.
SO MANY QUESTIONS FILL HIS HEAD. WHAT AM I DOING HERE? HE WONDERS, 'N BAT..IN'S HOUSE? AND HOW DID I KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT SIR?
WAS IT MY RADAR SENSE THAT--?
NO. RADAR SENSE? HE DOESN'T HAVE RADAR SENSE.. MURDOCK DOES.
HE ,SN T A BL ND MAN. . MURDOCK S
THEN WHY, HE SUDDENLY REALIZES, CAN'T HE SEE HIMSELF IN THE MIRROR? WHY IS THE WORLD SO DARK AND COLD?
HE THINKS OF THE WORDS HE SPOKE TO SIR: "NO MORE HIDING NO MORE LIES.


"NO MORE MASKS."
HE IS MURDOCK. HE IS BATLIN.
HE'S CONTRA-DICTION AND HYPOCRISY NOBLE HERO AND SOUL-LESS VIGILANTE.
HE'S EVERY DAREDEVIL THAT EVER WAS--OR WILL BE.
ALL THIS TIME--HE'S BEEN THE GHOST HAUNTING HIMSELF.
ALL
THIS

TIME:
GOOD LITTLE BOY, KNEELS IN PRAYER. LOVES HIS FATHER. PINES FOR HIS MOTHER.
SWEARS TO BE GOOD. TO BE GENTLE AND KIND. NO FIGHTING, NO ANGER, NO FISTS.
GOOD LITTLE BOY, BLIND AS A BAT. FULL OF RAGE AND PAIN. SEEKING VENGEANCE AND BLOOD.
GOOD LITTLE BOY, GOES TO CONFESSION WORSHIPS GOD AND THE LAW SANCTITY AND ORDER
WEARS A MASK AND RUNS WILD. BREAKS THE LAW. LAUGHS IN GOD'S FACE.
GOOD LITTLE BOY, PUSHES HER--HARD. WATCHES HER FALL. WATCHES HER...

...DIE!
HE DIDN'T MEAN TO DO IT. HE WAS LITTLE MORE THAN A BOY, THEN... HUNTING THE MEN WHO'D KILLED HIS FATHER... WHEN HE STUMBLED ONTO THE WOMEN... AND THEY ATTACKED HIM.*
CONFUSED, HIS HYPER-SENSES OVERWHELMED BY THE STINK OF SEX AND CHEAP PERFUME, HE THRASHED OUT WITHOUT THINKING--AND ONE OF THEM FELL. (I'M NOT A KILLER.) DOWN LIKE GLORIANNA. (I'M A HERO!) DOWN...
...LIKE HIS OWN
DAMNED
SOUL.
* SEE THE CLASSIC MAN WITHOUT FEAR MINI-SERIES. --J.F.

MATT.
MATT--IT'S KAREN... AND FOGGY.
MATT...?
BLIND EYES, DEAD EYES, STARE BACK AT HER...
MATT MURDOCK HAS GONE AWAY. AS HAS JACK BATLIN. AS HAS EVERY DAREDEVIL THAT EVER WAS...
I DON'T UNDERSTAND ANY OF THIS! MATT'S-- ALIVE?!
WH-WHAT'S HE DOING IN THAT COSTUME?! HOW DID HE--?!
NOT NOW, FOGGY.
...OR EVER WILL BE.
NOT NOW.
NO IDENTITY. NO SIGHT. NO HEARING. NO TASTE. NO TOUCH. NO SMELL. ONLY TEARS: A DELUGE OF THE SOUL.
BUT ALL THE TEARS IN CREATION...
...CAN'T WASH THE BLOOD...
...OFF HIS COLD AND TREMBLING HANDS.
NEXT!
PURGATORIO

BEAST CHARMING
Perenially purveying a plenitude of purty, prettified pictures to my peerless pals!
OCD
is where it's at!
Queries? Requests? Contact me at
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Pledged to scan all series great and small...